UC San Diego
UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

University of California Seismic Safety Overview

The University of California proactively launched a comprehensive, multi-year effort to make new updates to seismic safety. The primary goal of the initiative, created in 2017, is to provide an adequate level of safety and well-being for the UC community and the public at large.

All University of California structures, including those at UC San Diego, meet applicable California building codes in effect at the time of their construction and at the time of a renovation. The UC system is exceeding state and local requirements through its proactive seismic updates and improvements. The critical upgrades during the next decade will take UC structures beyond what is currently required by state and local building authorities.

There are few, if any, parallel seismic retrofitting efforts in the private sector — it is unlikely that the office buildings, shopping centers and other places Californians visit will be subject to the sort of extensive seismic review UC is conducting, much less the assurance of remediation/retrofitting we have committed to. However, UC is holding itself to a higher standard in ensuring safety at each campus across the state.

As part of this effort, UC San Diego, along with other UC campuses, will retrofit, replace or vacate all buildings with significant seismic performance deficiencies no later than the year 2030.

The work that has been underway across all 10 University of California campuses, including UC San Diego, has included assessing existing seismic hazards. Structural engineers have been re-evaluating the integrity of UC's buildings under the stricter standards developed through this updated effort. Seismic performance ratings were developed by UC, in collaboration with the California Department of General Services and California State University. The full description of ratings levels are:

I – IV	*Seismic Safety Policy Compliant*
V	*Will Require Further Evaluation and, if Confirmed, Must be Addressed*
VI	*High-Priority for Correction*
VII	*Must be Unoccupied and Access-Restricted*

At UC San Diego, 465 structures owned or occupied by the campus were evaluated. While all university-owned buildings were designed and constructed in adherence to the codes in effect at the time of their construction, preliminary results determined that 230 of the buildings assessed currently have a seismic performance rating of "V." These buildings will require further evaluation and, if the ratings are confirmed, the seismic deficiencies must be addressed. Additionally, another 13 buildings were assessed at a seismic performance rating of "VI," or a high-priority for correction.

No UC San Diego buildings were found to warrant a “VII” rating.

While these ratings may, understandably, generate concern, it is important to note that a building rating can be the result of a seismic deficiency in just one portion of the structure and does not necessarily indicate that an entire building is compromised.

UC San Diego is also somewhat unique among the 10 UC campuses as it is located on geographically complex terrain and many of its structures are architecturally complex as well. This combination of factors can lead to a greater number of structures that have the potential to be rated a higher seismic risk; however with deeper analysis, many of these same buildings are expected to be re-categorized as seismically safe.

UC San Diego, like other UC campuses, will start prioritizing and planning its retrofitting work after the preliminary ratings are thoroughly evaluated and confirmed by engineers. Once the full evaluation process is completed, it is likely that about half of the buildings that are currently in the “V” category will potentially be given a category “IV” rating which is considered seismic safety policy compliant.

Addressing seismic deficiencies is an ongoing process of continuous improvement driven by constant advancements in seismic understanding, which is an inherent part of living in California.